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PART III

THE INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT

What should we do about unemployment? It is obvious that we will not comprehend and cannot intelligently attack a problem that goes as deep into the industrial organization of society as does unemployment, so long as we know so little about it as we do now. The scantiness of our present knowledge of unemployment has already been pointed out. It does not enable us to attack unemployment much more successfully than did the ancient physicians attack physical illness in the days when medical science consisted only of a series of magical spells and potions. Our most fundamental need at the present time in attacking unemployment is to know something about it—its facts, its causes—and its significance.

It was with the object of contributing more definite information to our knowledge of Philadelphia's unemployment that the City of Philadelphia invited the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to conduct an unemployment canvass among its policyholders during the past winter.

Unfortunately this information, while of invaluable aid in throwing light on the amount of unemployment in the past winter, is of little help in throwing light on the actual amount of unemployment that may exist at any time in the future.

As a means of supplementing the Metropolitan canvass, arrangements have been made with the State Department of Labor and Industry that it should collect at regular quarterly intervals, statistics of unemployment and employment in Philadelphia which will give a usable, even if inadequate, basis for estimating the amount of unemployment there is at any particular time in the future. The names of 250 manufacturing concerns, chosen so as to be as nearly typical of all sizes and kinds of manufacturing industries as possible, were submitted by the Department of Public Works. The plan provides that the Department of Labor and Industry will collect monthly statements from these firms and compile the figures, showing for one particular week:

1. The number employed,
 - Full time
 - Part time
 - At normal operating capacity
2. The number of hours worked per week
3. The total payroll (excluding salaries),
 - Actual for week of
 - When running to capacity

These statistics should furnish a fair basis for estimating the variation in and amount of unemployment in the important manufacturing industries of Philadelphia at the canvass periods. By properly "weighting" the statistics for each different industry, according to the importance of that industry in the city as indicated by census figures, it will be possible to form some idea of the extent of unemployment in Philadelphia manufactories, as a whole, at these canvass periods. In order not to disclose the business conditions of individual firms, the names of the firms from whom figures are collected are not given. Since Philadelphia is basically and pre-eminently a manufacturing city, these figures will be sufficiently representative of the city as a whole to furnish a usable, though inadequate, clue to future conditions. As a result, we should not be in the future in such a quandary—whether unemployment is serious enough to justify ultra-heroic measures—as we were in the past winter.

These two sets of statistics will furnish but the barest outline of the knowledge we need. Over and above general data, we need the closest and most detailed analysis of the causes, extent and effects of unemployment in each important industry. It is only by such studies that we will be enabled to discuss unemployment intelligently.

Every organization interested in making Philadelphia a better city, industrially and socially, has an opportunity and a duty to forward the collection and discussion of the facts of unemployment in this city. The causes and facts of unemployment differ so widely in different industries, and even in different phases of the same industry, that any investigations taken up should be concentrated upon a study of a single industry. The Consumers' League has perhaps the best opportunity to throw light on conditions in certain Philadelphia industries by including a study of the amount, cause and results of unemployment in the industries which

it investigates. The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania should take the lead, in the community's efforts to study the problem. A course in unemployment should be offered. Eventually a department of unemployment would be established which shall give graduate and undergraduate courses in the subject; whose graduate students shall be assigned to investigate facts and results; and which shall assist in forwarding and coördinating the efforts of the various agencies that are studying the situation in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Training School for Social Workers is another agency that we naturally expect to forward such discussion. Yet its roster of courses for the year 1914-15 contains no course on unemployment. Every school, every church, every club that is interested in social and industrial questions has a chance to encourage and push the discussion of a question so vital to the industrial and social well-being of the community.